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ABSTRACT

The University New Student Census (UNSC) for 1988 was completed by 546 freshmen entering the University of Maryland, College Park. Of the students sampled, 55% were male and 45% female. The majority of students polled were white (76%), 12% were Black, 10% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 0.2% American Indian/Native Alaskan, and 0.6% other. Student attitudes and expectations were explored for both academic and extracurricular interests: 34% chose Maryland for its academic programs and 50% said it was their first choice; students felt their greatest adjustment would be learning to budget time wisely and studying efficiently; and students felt that they would utilize opportunities for counseling and educational skills services, with the greatest interest shown in educational and vocational planning and in learning to study more efficiently. Entering freshmen in 1988 may be slightly different from those of past years, in that mean Scholastic Aptitude Test scores in 1988 were 564 Quantitative and 493 Verbal, which is an increase from the 1987 scores of 548 Quantitative and 484 Verbal. A description of Clark-Trow student types is included. Contains 1 reference. (Author/KM)

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A PROFILE OF INCOMING FRESHMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PARK, 1988-1989

Susan J. Schwalb and William E. Sedlacek

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Summary

The University New Student Census (UNSC) for 1988 was completed by 546 freshman entering the University of Maryland, College Park.

55% of the students sampled were male and 45% female. The majority of students polled were White (76%), 12% were Black, 10% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 0.2% American Indian/Native Alaskan, and 0.6% other.

Student attitudes and expectations were explored for both academic and extracurricular interests. 34% of the incoming class chose Maryland for its academic programs and 50% said it was their first choice school. Students felt their greatest adjustment to college would be learning to budget time wisely and studying efficiently. Students felt that they would utilize opportunities for counseling and educational skills services with the greatest interest shown in educational and vocational planning, and in learning to study more efficiently.

1988 entering freshmen may be slightly different from those of past years. The mean SAT scores for the 1988 incoming freshman class were 564 Quantitative and 493 Verbal which is an increase from the 1987 scores of 548 Quantitative and 484 Verbal.

Information on a variety of other topics was presented and discussed.

A PROFILE OF INCOMING FRESHMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PARK, 1988-1989

The University New Student Census (UNSC) was administered to the incoming freshman class at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) in order to get a general profile of the new students in a variety of areas.

546 students completed the 1988 survey. Of this group, 55% were male and 45% female. The majority of students (76%) were White, 12% were Black, 10% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 0.2% American Indian/Native Alaskian, and 0.6% other. The greatest differences in number of each gender within groups were Black males 8%, Black females 16%, and Asian males 12%, Asian females 7%.

General trends will be reported from student responses as well as extreme variations in responses and differences for male and female. Some comparisons will be made to the 1987 freshman class.

Impressions of the University:

34% of the freshmen chose the UMCP for its academic programs, a slight increase from 1987, and only 6% chose Maryland because they were not accepted at their preferred school. Other reasons for choosing Maryland were; 15% relatively inexpensive, 23% geographic location, 4% friend or relation currently attends, 2% friend or relation formerly attended, 1% high school teacher/counselor suggested it and 13% other. A greater percentage of males (40%) than females (29%) chose Maryland because it offered the academic program they wanted.

Most of the students surveyed received most of their information about Maryland from other University students (27%), and University publications (27%). Other places that students went for information were high school sources (13%), parents (8%), university alumni (8%), college guides (5%), university faculty/staff (3%), and other (9%).

50% of all freshmen applied to Maryland as their first choice school and another 29% chose it as their second choice of the schools that they applied to. Only 4% of the students said that Maryland was their last choice.

Academic Strengths:

Students were largely in agreement as to the hardest adjustments that they would have to make to college life. Budgeting time wisely 24%, and studying efficiently, 24%, were the greatest concerns. When asked about their academic weaknesses, 37% felt that study habits was their greatest weakness, as opposed to content areas. The greatest weaknesses in content areas were math (18%) and writing (17%). Large differences were found between males and females. Math was a weaker area for females (23%) than for males (14%). Study habits, while weakest for both sexes, was reported weaker for males (43%) than for females (30%).

Students were confident about their academic futures with 40% reporting that they were absolutely certain that they would stay at Maryland through the completion of their degree. This answer represents an increase from 36% in 1987. A majority of students said that they would not drop out, even temporarily, while at the UMCP.

In terms of using letter grades to rate their academic success, 54% of the students said that a "C" would be only a

"fair" grade for them. Another 33% of the students felt that a "C" would be poor work for them. Male and female reports were virtually identical in this area. In looking toward their coursework at Maryland, most students were in agreement with the statement, "I expect that for the most part, my courses will be stimulating and exciting."

Career Orientation:

Responses to many survey items reflected the strong career orientation amoung the incoming freshman class. Many answers reflected an attitude that college education was merely a means to a job, rather than a worthwhile academic pursuit in and of itself. 44% of the students felt their most important current educational objective was to learn skills directly applicable to their career goals, with the second most common response (18%) being the need to decide upon a career goal. All other response choices had to do with general educational goals not specifically tied to career issues. However, females (38%) were less likely than males (50%) to answer that their main goal was to obtain career skills.

Clark and Trow (1966) developed the concept of examining student types to gain a better understanding of students. Students ranked four descriptive paragraphs, choosing the one that most reflected their own educational philosophy. The paragraphs were based on the Clark-Trow model which identifies four student types: vocational, academic, collegiate and non-conforming. Table 1 shows the four philosophies as written in the UNSC. The philosophies that the students chose as most applicable to them were: vocational (38%), collegiate (34%), academic (20%), and non-conforming (6%).

39% of the students felt that their highest academic degree would be at the master's level while another 31% feel that it would be a BA/BS. 27% of students felt that they would obtain a Ph.D., medical or law degree. These figures represent a change from 1987 where 35% expected a bachelor's degree and 44% expected a master's degree. In 1987 only 20% expected a Ph.D., medical or law degree.

When students were asked why they would most likely stay and complete degree requirements, the most popular response (28%) was because a college degree is the only way to enter their chosen

profession. Another 21% said that they needed the degree to enter graduate or professional school.

A final piece of career information is that most students agreed with the statement, "I would like the opportunity to gain work experience in my major before I graduate.

Extracurricular Activities:

42% of the incoming freshman expected to be identified most with their residence hall group. 14% of students expected to identify with a fraternity or sorority, and 11% with a campus academic group. Other less popular responses were; off campus organization (6%) and political groups (2%). 17% of the students chose "other".

When freshmen were asked what factor had contributed most to their own development during the past year, 33% said it was their social life and 27% responded that "friendships made" was the most significant contributor. Other possible choices were related jobs, social and political groups, school work, research, and contact with teachers/counselors.

When asked about intended involvement in intramural athletics, more males than females responded positively.

Interest in Counseling:

Most students responded that they would be interested in some form of counseling, even though "not interested" was one of the choices. The most positive responses reaffirmed the career orientation of this group. 39% said the counseling that they would be most interested in receiving would be in educational and vocational planning. Another 31% of students indicated a preference to learn to study more efficiently. Only 1% said that they would be interested in discussing emotional or social concerns. The majority of students agreed with the statement, "I know what kind of life I want for myself."

References:

Clark, B. R., & Trow, M. (1966). Determinants of college student subcultures. In T. M. Newcomb, & E. K. Wilson (Eds.), The study of college peer groups. Chicago, Aldine.

Table 1

Clark-Trow Student Types

Philosophy A (Vocational): In college primarily to prepare for a career; view practical work experience as more important than intellectual dicussions or extracurricular activities.

Philosophy B (Academic): Attaches greatest importance to interest in ideas, pursuit of knowledge, and cultivation of the intellect. Often spends leisure time in reading books not required for course work and in intellectual discussions.

Philosophy C (Collegiate): Highly involved in social and other extracurricular activities. Considers learning from social relationships as an important part of the college experience.

Philosophy D (Non-conforming): Emphasizes individual interests and styles, concern for personal identity, and is generally critical of and detached from the college, faculty and administration.

see Clark and Trow (1966)